

## BONNER COUNTY SETTING

Bonner County is located in the panhandle of Northern Idaho and is bounded by the states of Montana and Washington, with Boundary County to the north and Kootenai County to the south. The county covers approximately 1.1 million acres, most of which is forested. Public lands occupy 60% of the land base in Bonner County (Bonner Co. Comprehensive Plan). Dominant geographic features include the Selkirk and Cabinet Mountain Ranges, Priest Lake and Lake Pend Oreille. The Selkirk Mountain Range reaches elevations of 7000 feet and separates the Priest Lake Basin on the west side of the county from the Purcell Trench. The Purcell Trench lies between the Selkirks and Cabinets and is dominated by Lake Pend Oreille which is 46 miles long and reaches depth of 1100 feet. The Cabinet Mountain Range also reaches elevations of 7000 feet and lies along the eastern boundary of Bonner County at the Montana state line.

Records from the 2000 census show the population of Bonner County at 36,865. As of 2002, the Idaho Department of Commerce placed the population at 38,205. This is up from 26,662 in 1990 (U.S. Census 200). This translates into an increase in population of 43% between 1990 and 2002. At this rate of growth, the population in 2010 will be approximately 50,000. The majority of the increase, as well as the anticipated increase to 2010, lie in areas considered to be in the wildland urban interface. As illustrated in Table 1, there was another significant growth spurt between 1970 and 1980.

<b>Table I Bonner County Population</b>						
<b>Year</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>Population</b>	15,587	15,560	24,163	26,622	36,865	38,205

Source: 2000 US Census and Idaho Dept. of Commerce

## CLIMATE

Annual precipitation in Bonner County ranges from 20 inches to 60 inches. The highest amount of precipitation is received in the mountains in the northwest part of the county. The southern part of the county receives the least amount of precipitation while Sandpoint's average annual precipitation is 33 inches. Table 2 shows the monthly average temperatures and precipitation as well as the record high and low temperatures for each month for Sandpoint. The driest months for Bonner County are normally July, August, and September and correspond to the height of the wildland fire season for Northern Idaho. Some rainfall normally occurs during these months, but extended dry periods can occur. Summer storms produce lightning that can cause wildfires. When a fire does occur as a result of a lightning storm, the winds that accompany the storm can create erratic fire behavior which complicates suppression efforts.